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A New Note in the Christmas Carol

By
Clara Wood Mingins

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I.

MEMORIES.

"It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near to earth
To touch their harps of gold."

So sang the clear, full, childish voice. Singularly melodious, thrilling, sympathetic, it floated up and out, seeming to envelope in a tender, joyous harmony all who came within its range.

In the library "Father dear" sat with pen suspended and moistened eyes, as the notes of the Christmas Carol were borne in upon him. The thronging memories carried him back to that wonderful Christmas morning eight years before, when the sweet singer was born.

She had come in a flood of golden sunlight, when Christmas bells were chiming, happy voices singing, and the joy of life seemed rampant upon all the

earth. The "doctor friend" had come to him in this same library and had said:

"The Christmas day has brought to you and your house God's blessing—the gift of a little child."

Together they had gone to that quiet, peaceful room, and found mother with the baby girl upon her arm. "A tiny image of your own dear self," he had fondly said, and with the passing years, the child had kept that strong likeness to her mother, both in character and features.

Later he had gone about the house attending to the many things they had planned for others. Like two children, they had always kept many of the Christmas customs: hung up their stockings, had a huge Christmas tree for all the household, remembering every one in a way that would bring the most real joy, given to each child friend some longed for treasure, fed the birds and put a lighted candle in the window to guide the Christ Child. Each Christmas they had tried to bring comfort to some sorrowing heart, sharing their joy, letting their light shine. .

Everywhere he had turned that day, he had been met with smiling faces, hearty hand clasps, and more than one fervent "God bless you, sir," from hearts that could tell of burdens lifted or eased, and of lives turned from bitterness to sweetness. Truly, it had been a day of rejoicing.

At sunset he had sat with the little mother again, telling her about the day as together they watched from her window the ever changing glory of the sea. "No sorrowing one has knocked at our door to-day,"

he said gently, "our Christmas candle has brought only joy." And she had softly quoted :

"Then be ye glad, good people,
This night of all the year,
And light up all your candles,
For His star it shineth clear."

Cuddling their baby close, she had looked with shining eyes from the child to him and said earnestly, "She is a little Christmas Star, Who knows what message of joy she brings, what midnight gloom she may dispel?"

Then he had gone, at her request, to light the Christmas tree, and the countless candles throughout the house, had given loving greetings and messages from her and baby to all the household gathered in the big hall and had stopped to sing one Christmas Carol that she might hear. It was as his voice soared upward to her,

"Peace on earth, good will to man,
From Heaven's all gracious King,"

that she had gone, gone on the wings of light and song, leaving him dumb, alone in the dark.

Later, Jeanie, faithful friend, had brought to him, "the wee Lassie, sir," and drawing the shades high, had flooded the room with moonlight; then left him alone with his little comforter.

Long he had stood looking out on the golden path of light and glory that seemed to stretch from the great Beyond, across the sea, through the window, and to encircle him and the tiny daughter, his blessing, his joy, his little "Christmas Star." She had indeed lighted him through the dark way, comforted him, helped him to accept the cup of sorrow with fortitude.

She had been christened "Dorothy" for her grandmother, and had grown in grace and beauty. There had been no lack of loving care, willing hearts and hands had served her; first, for love of the mother, who gave her birth, later for love of herself.

The song ceased. Then quick dancing footsteps, the opening and closing of the library door, and the singer was by his side. Throwing her arms about his neck, she covered his face with kisses. Stepping back and holding his face between her hands, she looked long and lovingly at him. "Father, dear, I have kissed the sorry lines all away except those back of your eyes." Then settling herself in his arms she fell silent,—still for a time.

"Father, dear, the Christmas Carols seem always to make you sorrowful. I have noticed, too, when we sing the carols in church, that so many people look sad. Often, I have seen tears in their eyes. Only the children look really happy. Why is that, father?"

"It was a message of joy that came upon the midnight clear, wasn't it?" Then nestling closer, she went on softly: "You know I was singing the carol to mother just now, the one she loved the best,

because I could just feel her happy thought, and I wanted to be happy with her, then suddenly, I thought you would be remembering, so I came."

A thoughtful pause, and then—"I wonder why she seems so far away to you! Perhaps you shut her out thinking that she is dead, and don't understand that she is with us in the thought of love she left all about us. You know that is what mother lettered her own self over the center window in my nursery, 'God is Love.'

"Jeanie said she watched her paint it and the other one too: 'Thou shalt not be afraid,' and while she painted, she explained to Jeanie. Sometimes, it seems as if I could hear her explaining to me. Of course, I can not tell what she says,—it isn't words exactly,—but it's just as if that love were a great white cloud, wrapping me round and round wherever I am, and holding me safe from harm,—like your arms, father, dear. You see,—love is just,—why it's everything. Jeanie says, 'love never dies.'"

The twilight shadows were falling fast around them, but the Bethlehem Star of peace and joy had risen in both their hearts. Father dear had caught a new note in the Christmas Carol. "Love never dies."

II.

GROWING IN GRACE.

Dorothy had finished her lessons and was sitting in the deep window seat in the nursery, looking out upon the water, and listening to the voices of the waves as they dashed against the shore.

She was on friendly terms with all her world, the flowers, the trees, and every dancing sunbeam held a language for her.

Horses, dogs and birds, every living thing that came into her life became her friends.

Her loving confidence in her fellow beings won from each the best he had to give.

So carefully had she been kept from all self-pity and the tearful sympathy of unwise friends that she was in every way a wholesome, happy, winsome little lassie.

There was no room in all the house that Dorothy loved quite so well as her own dear nursery. Here she always came to dream her dreams, or study out her weighty problems.

This was the room that mother dear had thought out for her, before ever she was born. Every detail spoke silently, but eloquently, to the child's mind of harmony and purity, of true uplifting ideals.

The artistic coloring of walls and rugs, the few pictures chosen for their real value and lasting

impressions; the wide outlook on sea and sky and garden, together with everything that could make for health and comfort, voiced the wise and loving care of the mother whose tender eyes looked down from above the mantel at the little dreamer in the window seat.

Suddenly, the door burst open and Lois, a child about a year younger than Dorothy, bounded in, while just behind and fairly tumbling over her came a great white dog, a Scotch collie called Rings, because of a buff-colored ring of hair around his tail.

In a moment, quiet had taken flight, and a game of hide and seek was in full swing. Rings had played this game since puppy days, he knew all the best hiding places, and he knew just how long to search before discoveries were in order. Gravely he walked about poking his nose into possible covers and then away he dashed to the goal amid peals of laughter. Jeanie dropped her sewing to enjoy the sport.

Father, entering the house with the doctor remarked: "We are evidently just in time for the fun." They joined the players in the upper hall and away they all streamed to the play room with Rings in hot pursuit.

Racing through the school-room, they swept the little German music master off his feet. But he had not forgotten his boy days and, dropping hat and gloves, was after them. Timothy, guide, philosopher and friend, and incidentally manager of the estate, coming in from the greenhouse with flowers,

deposited his precious burden in the arms of a maid, and took the stairs in leaps. Timothy had assisted in the merriment ever since Dorothy could ride on his shoulder, holding fast to his curly hair. The frolic spread all over the house.

Lois was found hiding behind a stately footman. The doctor was dragged by Rings from under the dining-room table. Father stowed himself on the top shelf of the linen press, nearly causing Rings to turn himself inside out in his effort to get at him. Timothy lost himself in a cubby-hole in the attic and had to be rescued, for the door had no inside latch. The fun was brought to a breathless climax, when Bridgie, the cook, hid Dorothy in a great boiler and no one could find her. * * *

The doctor looked wistfully after Jeanie as she went up the wide stairs with a dancing child clinging to either hand. "That is a pretty picture," he said to Mr. Douglas; "you should be a happy man, for you have caused some sorrowing ones to rejoice. Jeanie, now—it is ten years, is it not? I thought that night you called me to come quickly, I had never seen a face so sad. Jeanie is all that is noble, God bless her!"

"Yes," said Mr. Douglas, "think what she has been to us. My wife, Stella, talked to her by the hour before Dorothy was born, told her all her plans, hopes and fears. It was Stella who insisted that the old tradition of the Christmas Candle had a great significance, 'the light could guide no ill to us.' "

"Yes, we have been privileged to dry some of the

tears, open the blinds for a few so that the sunlight might come in. But think of the blessing brought to us. Look at Timothy, and Bridgie; could money buy the influence that is thrown about Dorothy? When I think of all they do for me and mine, I feel that I have done very little."

"How about that little Lois?" asked the doctor.

"She is another blessing. Jeanie came upon the child in the city (living with a Mrs. MacDonald, who did fine sewing) and in time learned her story. It seems that Mrs. MacDonald's brother, who was a sailor on the steamship M—— (lost about six years ago, you remember), rescued this child. The passengers were picked up by several vessels and widely separated. This sailor took the child at first to a sister in Scotland and afterwards to America in his search for her parents. He made every effort to find them, but grew discouraged as time went on and he found no clue. Mrs. MacDonald felt that the child should have advantages they could not give, and they were sorely troubled.

"They called her Lois, because of the initials L. O. I. S. on a handkerchief bound around the little wrist. It was the only mark about her, except the beautiful clothing.

"Well—you know the rest. It was something I could do, so here she is, and royally welcome. If we never find her parents, we will try and make good her loss.

"Dorothy is right. She says it is ridiculous for one little girl to have as much as she does, and 'Mother dear would want us to share.'

"By the way, doctor, Christmas plans are in the air; stay and hear about them.

"I will indeed," said the doctor, as they turned toward the library door. "Do you know," the doctor continued, "that of all lonesome things on the face of the earth a bachelor's lot at Christmas time seems the very essence of dreariness?"

The words were spoken jestingly, but there was an undercurrent of intense pathos in them, that made Mr. Douglas lay his hand lovingly on his shoulder as he said, gravely: "I believe you are right, my friend; I am a rich and happy man, not only in the possession of present blessings, but in the precious memories of past joys. I think this is going to be the very best Christmas of all my life, because I am learning a little of true gratitude."

"It is going to be a rough night," said Mr. Douglas, as he turned to the window and looked out into the gathering darkness and noted the white flakes falling on the window-ledge outside. "The gray clouds have been settling down all day, the wind is rising rapidly, and there is every indication of a heavy storm. There promises to be plenty of snow for the Christmas frolic."

Then, drawing the shades, he drew two comfortable easy chairs before the fire, just as the children came tripping in.

III.

CHRISTMAS PLANS.

"Well," said the doctor, "let us hear about the Christmas plans. I feel perfectly certain that I shall have to go to the city and offer assistance to Santa Claus. Every year it turns out that some little boy or girl gets up Christmas morning to an empty stocking and no one wants such a thing to happen."

"Why, that's just what we want to do—give a really merry Christmas to some of the sorry ones," and Dorothy plunged into the subject. "You know last summer there were some children in this neighborhood, 'Fresh air children,' they were called. Jeanie brought one of them, a little girl, Maddie Morrison, over here to see if any of my dresses would fit her. We played with her in the garden a long time. She said she wanted to live here always, because it was so quiet, she 'could hear her own feet walking.'"

"Do you know, Maddie had never seen flowers growing out of doors and never had rolled on the grass. It was the way she talked of her home, and the way she lived with her grandmother, that made us plan to have a Christmas time.

"It is just as lovely in the country in the winter as it is in the summer, and so different."

"The air is just as fresh," broke in Lois, and they all laughed while Rings drew a little nearer to the crackling grate fire.

"The people who invited the children last summer," Dorothy, full of her cherished plans, went on, "have invited them this Christmas time. The children are coming one week before Christmas day and stay until after the New Year. We are planning to have two weeks of happy days; snow-balling, sleighing, making snow men and forts, and, oh! all kinds of winter games.

"Every one is going to do something to give them a good time. Mrs. Grant is going to invite them to her house to pop corn, Mrs. Waring is going to show them some beautiful pictures and have a moonlight ride, father says Lois and I may invite them to a candy pull, and give a party Christmas afternoon. We are going to have a Santa Claus hunt.

"There will be a gift hidden about the house for each child and he or she must find it. It's going to be a happy time for every one."

"Is there to be a Christmas tree?" asked the doctor.

"Not at the party; Christmas eve and Christmas morning are to belong to their hostess. She is to see about the tree and hanging the stockings and the surprises, and all that, just as if it were her own little boy or girl."

"The only thing that spoils it a little is,—we can't find Maddie Morrison," broke in Lois. "She does

not live where she used to and we planned to have her with us."

The doctor leaned suddenly forward, his face all aglow with eagerness, as he exclaimed: "That's just what I've been waiting for, some definite instruction from Santa Claus. I'm going in search of Maddie. She shall have all these good things that have been planned for her." Then, with an expression of utter bewilderment, he questioned: "Am I to send her by parcel post or just bring her in my suit case, or, will she be able to travel like any ordinary little girl, when she hears of the wonderful two weeks?"

A burst of laughter was their only reply.

"Very well," he said, "but I shall certainly find Maddie if she is findable."

"When you find her bring her to us," said Mr. Douglas, "and we will see that she has proper clothing—that is the arrangement for each child."

"No!" the doctor declared, "'finding is keeping.' I shall fit her out myself. Perhaps Jeanie can be persuaded to come with me and see how well I know what a little girl needs. Why shouldn't I have a stocking hung up in my chimney, a Christmas tree on my hearth, a Christmas candle in my window?" he demanded smilingly.

"We have worked very hard and long to earn our part for the Christmas surprise for the city children," continued Dorothy.

"Worked! Earned! Why, what did you work at and how did you earn anything?" the doctor asked, incredulously.

"Do tell us," father begged. "I knew something was going on, but I have waited to be told about it."

"Well," said Dorothy, "you know if we did not put ourselves into it somehow, it would not be a true gift. We are not very big and cannot make many things that would be of any real value, and we have only the money father gives us. We have saved nearly all of that——"

"And," Lois interrupted, "I put in the five-dollar gold piece Father Douglas gave me, because I routed the 'think you can'ts,' and learned to play the scales."

"Yes, and we've found out that the 'think you can'ts' are really 'don't want tos,'" Dorothy explained earnestly. "Sometimes I don't even want to want to," she added pensively. "Jeanie told us she knew just the thing for us to do. Jeanie said, if we would do certain things which meant a great deal more to us and others than money, we could have all we needed and know we had earned it——"

"And," chimed in Lois, "I just know we earned it."

"What were some of the things?" asked father.

"Why, the truly smiling, when you wanted to cry; and thinking kindly about people who seem not so *very* pleasant; trying to understand how they feel; being patient and willing and cheerful and obedient; without any 'wait a minutes,' or 'I'd rather nots,' or 'whys,'" both children excitedly explained.

"Jeanie says '*whys*' are all right, but its wise to remember the '*musts*.' You know, reading pages

of French, that have no story in them, and playing the exercises that make your fingers strong but have no tune, and learning '*six times*' so you know it anywhere you begin," sighed Lois. "Seems to me I earned as much as a *dollar* learning 'six times.'"

"I am certain you did," sympathized father.

"And you know," went on Dorothy, "it wasn't the just *looking* pleasant, it was the *feeling* pleasant.

"I always wanted Jeanie to curl my hair, and Mary can do it just as well, and Jeanie is often busy, so I was sure Mary pulled, and Mary was certain she did not intend to pull, and we were both troubled, until Jeanie said there was a tangle that *I* alone could untangle.

"Now I like Mary to curl my hair, and she is so kind and funny. We are going to keep on working, and Jeanie says we will have a big bank account by the end of another year."

The pause that followed was a thoughtful one. It was broken by the doctor asking: "Has anyone heard Jeanie express any Christmas desires?"

"I asked her what she would like me to give her," said Dorothy, "and she said, 'I would like your undivided attention to your sewing about half an hour each day.' She said, 'that would be a gift worth having.'"

"It's very hard to sew; I seem to find so much to interest me somewhere else, when I should be sewing--birds and clouds out of the window--and fairy stories in the grate fire."

"Rings always wants to play when it's sewing time," chuckled Lois, "and then my needle gets lost.

Seems to me Jeanie will have a Christmas present every day in the year.

The doctor rose, swinging Lois to his shoulder, declaring he must go home and prepare for the morrow's trip to the city, and murmured something about "offering Jeanie his undivided attention every day in the year."

IV.

MADDIE.

The doctor took an early train to the city and spent the best part of the forenoon trying to find someone who knew anything of the whereabouts of Maddie Morrison. He learned that the grandmother had died some time in August, that she was a quiet old body, keeping much to herself, and no one knew anything of the child. Almost discouraged, while waiting for a car, he asked a big policeman if he could give any information. He remembered "the little red-headed girl, the sunlight making a glory of her hair." "Yes, they took her to an asylum." He thought it was the one in B—— Street, and there the doctor found her.

The matron was not at all sure about the doctor's right to see the child, but bless you, the doctor had no doubts, and was so convincing that after much talking and telephoning a satisfactory arrangement was reached.

Maddie did not seem to be a very great favorite at the asylum. She had aired very decided opinions as to "orphan 'sylums." From what the doctor could gather, Maddie had somewhere gleaned the idea that she was an individual with the right to live and grow according to the dictates of her sunny-hearted nature.

She had grown restive under the constant surveillance, and in a fit of exasperation she had told the matron she was "tired bein' chased round. If it wasn't a woman mad 'cause she had too much to do, marching her round, it was a big girl puttin' on airs," "and she wasn't no roach to be routed out and 'sterm'nated."

When pressed for an explanation by an irate matron, she had drawn a very vivid picture of the destruction of roaches in the tenement where she had lived, and the "board o' health man" who had said, "you got to rout 'em out. Keep right after 'em till you 'sterm'nate 'em out." So "somebody was always shoo'in' 'em out o' one place into another, like you do the orphums here."

"She really is a very troublesome child," said the matron; "why, last Thursday an officer came to the door at two o'clock in the morning to say there was a child on the fire escape. He thought she might be walking in her sleep. When I reached there, with my heart in my mouth, I found Maddie, in her night clothing, with the thermometer at zero, calmly looking at the sky, and not one word of explanation can anyone get out of her, except that she wanted to."

"Then you would not call her a promising child," suggested the doctor.

"No—that is—the child is a care; she is not tractable. We have one hundred children here," and the matron threw out her hands in a most telling gesture.

"One hundred children!" murmured the doctor,

and turned from her, for something hurt his throat.

The next moment Maddie, who had wanted to "hear her own feet walking," was with them. A slip of a child, perhaps seven years old, with a frightened, anxious little face, that broke into dimpling smiles when the doctor lifted her to his knee with a "Well, Maddie, I have come to take you home with me, to the Christmas jollification, you know."

Maddie did not know, but she was willing to take him on trust. She held fast to his finger, and leaned her bright head against him, while he put on her shabby little coat that did not fit, and the shabbier little hat. The matron looked at him, half smiling, and then at Maddie with perplexity.

"It is just a little helpless child after all," she thought. Then, taking the bonny face between her hands, she stooped and kissed her. "Be a good girl, dear,—I hope you will be happy."

It was here that Maddie made her explanatory apology. "I will be. I couldn't be happy here, you see—'cause—I wasn't used to bein' a 'sylum orphum—I was born the other kind of a orphum—they're different and always has a granny—and a lap—and——"

"Yes, I know, dear," replied the matron, looking very red and teary, and ready to laugh all at once, while the doctor shook hands in a haven't-a-moment-to-spare sort of a way, and hurried the small prattler away.

They found Jeanie waiting at the store with everything ready for the trying on. Jeanie, who

seemed to know all about little girls—and doctors. Then followed a most exciting time. Maddie hardly knew just what happened, but dusk found her with the doctor and Jeanie, homeward bound. No one would ever have suspected, to see her then, that she knew aught of “’sylums.”

“Tell me, Maddie,” said the doctor, “what *were* you doing on the fire escape at midnight?”

“I was talkin’ to God,” she answered, quite simply. “You see, before granny died, she said to me: ‘Maddie, dear, be sure and remember, *God will take care o’ you.* Now don’t forget it,’ she said, ‘just keep rememberin’, *God will take care o’ you.*’

“You see, granny forgot ’bout God—she told me so—and she wanted me to be different. When I got to the ’sylum, I tho’t He didn’t live there, tho’ they did read ’bout Him outen a book every mornin’, and before we et we shut our eyes and said somethin’ sounded like ‘ou—wou—wo—wou,’ they said it so fast, I never knew just what they was talkin’, but they called it ‘thanking God.’ I just kept rememberin’, *God will take care o’ you*, but it seemed like—He—maybe didn’t.

“Then, when they sent me to bed ’cause I told ’em they all acted sif orphums was to be ’stirm’nated like bugs—I s’pose bein’ in bed so long, ’fore it was night, I woke up, ’fore it was day, and got to thinkin’—He had forgot all about me, ’cause granny had forgot about Him.

“I went out on the fire ’scape, so I could get a little nearer to Him, and told him, nice and p’lite, for I don’t believe God likes to be wowed at: ‘God,

I reely ain't no roach, and I don't want to be 'ster-m'nated. I am that little girl wot *you* made; please don't be mad to granny any more 'cause she forgot 'bout you. She was sorry.'

"Then I told God some things 'bout granny. How tired she was, how hard she worked, scrubbin' and washin'—an' she was old—and her bones was stiff; and I told God, 'Granny *never told no lies*, not for fair. Just play lies, you know, like when we didn't have anythin' to eat, she'd say, "Well, I guess we've been eatin' too much roast duck and fixin's, an' we better fast 'til morning," and then she'd hold me in her lap and we'd laff 'bout the duck not settin' well in our stummicks.'

"After 'while she'd say in a sort of a tuney talk-in' way:

'I've got Maddie and Maddie's got me,
High O! High O!
For the world we don't care a fiddle-de-dee,
Since I've got Maddie and Maddie's got me,
High O! High O!'

"I told God there wasn't no laps to the 'sylum, and would He please take care o' me quick."

The troubled blue eyes lifted to the doctor's face made him gather her suddenly into his arms and ask, "What is wrong with this lap?" With her curly red head against his shoulder they talked of more joyous happenings. The new shoes, with "shiny tips," the kid mittens with snappers to make them stay shut, the wonderful things they had seen

in the shops, the doll that sat wide-eyed on the arm of Jeanie's chair.

After a long, dreamy pause, Maddie sat erect, and putting her hands on the doctor's shoulders, she looked long and earnestly into his strong, kindly face. Slowly a light came into her eyes and she said: "God ain't forgot me. He sent you. Granny said I was to 'member, 'God will take care o' you,' and *He* DID!"

"Yes, Maddie," said the doctor, softly, and again, "Yes! yes!"

The head with its bobbing curls was back on his shoulder, the weary eyelids drooping.

"She is off to dreamland," the doctor thought, when she roused again:

"P'raps He will take care o' granny; she was sorry."

V.

WHERE IS DOROTHY?

While the world looked like fairy-land, glistening, sparkling in the glowing sunshine, the city children came. They were whisked away to the different homes amid the jingling of sleigh bells, each person preferring the long way round.

Then followed days of joyous happenings. It was Christmas weather, and there was snow enough for all the wonderful plans for winter games. The grown people as well as the children entered into the festivities and good times reigned supreme.

Dorothy and Lois twinkled about like sunbeams.

Father was kept busy answering questions and telling over and over again Christmas stories, traditions and legends.

Lois and Dorothy had admired again each gift and hidden them for the Santa Claus hunt on Christmas day.

Dorothy whispered to father in one ear and Lois whispered in the other, until father was certain the whispers were tangled in the middle of his head. Timothy said the house was so full of secrets, he expected to step on them.

Jeanie locked the school-room door and put the key in her pocket, and though everyone had ap-

proached her on the subject, no one was any the wiser.

The doctor flew in to talk to Jeanie and flew out again with such an air of importance that Jeanie looked thoughtfully after him.

The candy pull was over and had been a great success, each child spending the afternoon in sticky ecstasy.

"Isn't it wonderful how many lovely things happen every day?" said Dorothy to Timothy, who was sitting with a little girl on each knee, demanding to be told things.

"It will be Christmas day in three days, Dorothy, and your birthday."

"And I play it's mine," Lois interrupted Timothy, "because I don't really know, and sailor Tom said he thought I must have been born about December."

"Why not?" said Timothy; and some day you will know. Just because ships are lost, there is no rhyme nor reason in talking about people being lost; meantime, there are two Christmas candles shining here."

"Doctor says he is going to have Maddie for his Christmas candle; doesn't she look like a *real* one in her white dress and that hair?" Dorothy enthused.

"She does," Timothy admitted. "She will no doubt shine in more ways than one. She may need some snuffing; candles get into the way of sputtering if they are not well cared for." A pause, while

the black and blond heads rested contentedly against Timothy's broad shoulder.

"Do you think, Timothy," and the blond head lifted, "I am beginning to shine a little clearer, the way mother dear would want me to?"

"You do indeed, sweetheart," and Timothy's eyes were very soft just then. "You see, a happy, laughing little girl, who is always sharing her joy, is very like a clear light, a twinkling star—one feels better just to know she is there."

"Tell something about me," demanded Lois.

"It's a good little candle," and Timothy dropped a kiss on the glossy black head. "It burns more steadily every day. Seems to me," thoughtfully, "I have heard no crying for some time; tears have such a way of extinguishing the light."

"But it's Christmas secrets I'm waiting to hear," said Timothy, all animation, and while they assured him they could *not* tell *anything*, confided to him all the important secrets.

Hand in hand they took him through the house, showing him the exact spot where each treasure was to be found. Up into the tower they climbed to see the candles to be lighted Christmas eve. "Lois' shines out over the land, and mine shines out over the sea," said Dorothy.

For a time they stood looking out over the white world. "We will have more snow," said Timothy, as they turned to go, and the children greeted the announcement with joy.

"Timothy, will you play snowball with us this

afternoon? The children will be here about one o'clock, and we want to make a snow man."

"Well," said Timothy, "just let me catch anyone so much as thinking of playing without me!"

It was voted the very best afternoon's fun. There seemed to be as many grown people as children. Everyone played with zest, all were boys and girls together. The snow man looked as if he would walk away.

Timothy and the doctor chose sides, and then followed a snowball match that would be remembered for many a day by old and young.

"It's snowing! It's snowing!" chanted Maddie, and the children took up the cry.

"Looks like a big storm," said father, and while the children shouted and danced in the fast falling snow, the sleighs were brought out and preparations for getting home were quickly made.

Down the long winding driveway, through the gate, the merry party went to the music of the silver bells and happy laughter; while after them, throwing a last snowball, trooped Lois, Dorothy, Timothy, Maddie, Mr. Douglas, Jeanie and the doctor.

Faster and faster whirled the snow, until the sleighing party was lost to sight and those on foot turned back. Everybody hurried away, the doctor and Maddie went home, father and Timothy remembered things that must be done, Jeanie to see about dry clothing for the children.

Half an hour later, Lois ran into the library calling, "Dorothy!"

"She has not been here," said Mr. Douglas, and Lois went to Jeanie. It soon became apparent that Dorothy was not in the house. No one could remember just when they had seen her last.

"She is so taken up with Maddie, she may have gone on with the doctor," suggested a maid.

But no, she had not. It was discovered that Rings was also missing.

"It is not like Dorothy to go anywhere unless I know," said Jeanie, looking white and troubled.

"It is an exciting time," Mr. Douglas excused; "she probably got into one of the sleighs." But after everyone had been telephoned to and still no trace, serious alarm took possession of them.

By eight o'clock it was known throughout the place that Dorothy Douglas was missing. Men left their warm firesides and breasted the wild storm.

Mr. Douglas never rested, seeming with brain, heart and hand to accomplish the work of two men.

Timothy was everywhere, advising, encouraging, hoping.

Lights burned all night in the windows of rich and poor alike.

Mothers looked often at their sleeping children, and prayed for the little one lost in the storm.

The doctor, tireless, was directing someone, somewhere throughout all the anxious hours. With frightened, sobbing little Lois in his arms, he had walked the floor, soothing, comforting, until she forgot her fears and slept.

Fires were kept up, hot blankets in readiness,

steaming drinks and food for the exhausted searchers were always ready.

Everywhere people listened, longed, prayed for the signal agreed upon, the ringing of the church bells that would tell them Dorothy Douglas was safe.

VI.

CHRISTMAS CANDLES.

Morning dawned, but no slightest trace of the little wanderer had been found. Many of those who had toiled all night stood in groups talking.

"It was a wild night," said one.

"The wires are down and trains stalled," said another.

"It seems as though we had done everything we could, and yet one hardly knows how to stop, to just sit and wait," mourned Mr. Wright, the minister. He was white and worn with the anxiety of the night and he made no effort to hide his tears. He, like many others, loved Dorothy Douglas. "She is as dear to me as my own child," he said earnestly.

"It was in that blinding storm that she probably was bewildered and walked no one knows how far."

"I cannot understand why we found no trace of the dog; he would have made an effort to get help. No one seems to have heard him even bark or howl."

"At any rate, the dog would stay with her; I am glad she was not all alone."

"Has anyone thought of the sea?" suggested a man; "we have searched so thoroughly and so long, and it was less than an hour before at least a dozen people were looking for her."

No one spoke for a time. Everyone *had* thought of the sea and everyone had resolutely put the thought aside.

"It is too awfully cruel to think of," and a young man, a mere boy, suddenly put his head against the porch pillar and sobbed. He was employed about the Douglas estate.

Judge Lorimer laid his arm about the lad's shoulder and bent his splendid white head close to the rough brown one.

"I know just how you feel," he assured him, "why we cannot have it. The little white blossom, always defending, sheltering, comforting someone."

"She just made life over for me," continued the lad; "you know I was about down and out when I went begging Mr. Timothy to give me a chance. I can see her now, nothing but a baby—made me think of a bit of thistle-down with the sun shining on it. 'Boy,' she said, 'come and have some dinner, then you won't feel so sorry'—I was fair starved I tell you. *She* took hold of *my* hand and led me to the house. 'Bridgie, don't forget to give him a big plate of pudding,'—and it's been that way ever since."

So they talked of little Dorothy. Each had some tender memory. "She belongs to the community; in her estimation everyone is good and kind; she never saw anything but the angel side; she has been a little Christmas messenger," sorrowed an old man.

"What they are going to do at her own home, I can't think."

"Has anyone seen Mr. Douglas? He has grown

old since yesterday; and Timothy—I could hardly bear the look in the man's eyes."

A tall, handsome man, who had been a silent listener, spoke, and at the sound of his voice every one turned. "Let us not give up *hope*," he said. "I know we cannot think of anything more to do just now; still, let us think of her alive. We will accomplish more."

"That is Mr. Stanley," said the judge to a friend at his side; "built the big house on the Point, you know; only reached here last night."

* * * * *

It was Christmas eve. Stockings were filled and Christmas trees were trimmed, for little children slept in expectation of a joyous to-morrow.

No cheering news had come to the waiting hearts in Dorothy's home. Mr. Douglas paced back and forth in his library, while outside of the closed door the doctor kept time with the weary walker.

Timothy spoke softly to the doctor: "There is a Mr. Stanley here."

Mr. Douglas was with them instantly. "Bring him to the library, Timothy—come in doctor—perhaps——"

Mr. Stanley came forward with outstretched hand. "Mr. Douglas, understanding your sorrow as I do, though a stranger to you, let me try to comfort you. Let me beg of you to keep up your courage. So many things could have happened that none of us even suspect. I know it is better for all

concerned that you believe that the child is safe. Why take it for granted that evil has befallen her? Is not God our very present help in trouble?

"The storm is over," he assured them; "I think before morning much of the damage will be repaired and we will be in touch with the outside world again."

Mr. Douglas resumed his restless walk. "Dorothy is by nature a timid child; I cannot think of her, alone."

Suddenly a little figure reached his side, soft hands clasped his, and Maddie demanded: "Did *you* forget God? Granny did—*she* was sorry—she told me 'God will take care o' you!' and He did. Did you tell Dorothy, 'God will take care o' you?' 'Cause if you did, she will know about it and won't be afraid."

Timothy drew the little girl to his side. "Maddie," he said, "Dorothy knows God—she has always known Him."

"Then," said Maddie, "let's not be frightened any more. He *will* take care o' her."

Mr. Douglas sat down with a new light in his eyes, "Yes, Maddie, God will take care of her, I am certain He will. She understood so well—and in her own way explained to me,—'Love never faileth.' I *had* forgotten."

The doctor leaned forward and patted his old friend's hand.

Timothy stole softly up to the tower and lighted the Christmas candles.

Mr. Stanley's eyes rested longingly on Maddie. "Somewhere," he said, "I have a little daughter. I have not seen her for about six years. I have gone around the world following clues, but because I think as Maddie does, I am still expecting to find her.

"My wife and I were on the ill-fated Steamship M——. We were picked up by different vessels and for a time each believed the other lost. The baby we have never found. My wife thinks a sailor took the baby when helping her into the life-boat."

Mr. Douglas leaned forward and looked earnestly into the wonderful eyes of the speaker.

"How old was the child?"

"Nine months."

"Was there any distinguishing mark about her?"

"We hope so. The baby had put her arm in some tea and my wife tied her handkerchief around the little arm to keep the wet sleeve from touching it. The handkerchief had the initials L.O.I.S. in the corner." The doctor and Mr. Douglas rose simultaneously.

"I believe your quest is at an end. The child is here, in my house, has been for a long time."

"My child, here! How good God is!" Mr. Stanley's face was radiant.

Questions and explanations followed, then Mr. Douglas took him to the nursery, but counseled as little excitement as possible, as Lois had had a most trying day.

Surrounded by everything that love could provide,

Lois slept in Jeanie's arms, her dark head pillowed against Jeanie's cheek.

"So this is our baby," he murmured as he stood looking through a mist of tears upon the beautiful little face. Then stooping down, he gathered the sleeping child in his arms, holding her close in one long, clinging embrace.

Brokenly he expressed his gratitude and hurried away on his mission of love.

At midnight, Timothy in the tower looked out over a world glistening in the moonlight.

"The earth in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing,"

he quoted softly to himself. Then, hushed by the very presence of that love which had winged the angel song of old, his fears grew still, and the peaceful assurance that

"No harm could come to her
On ocean or on shore"

was born in his heart. Renewing the little candles, he recalled her face all alight, as she said: "My candle shines out over the sea, and Lois' over the land," and then he remembered that love's light shines out so far and wide that none may drift "beyond His love and care."

In the nursery, the room that Dorothy loved, Jeanie, her face white with suffering, stood before the illuminated text which she had so often read to

the child, as she held her little quivering form in her arms, quieting the baby fears, and assuring her of the all-loving care of the heavenly Father.

“Thou shalt not be afraid!”

It is a command, she had impressed upon Dorothy —“Mother dear wanted you to understand and obey.” To-night, Jeanie is battling with her own fears, but the loving command, with its promise, does its work, as it so often has before.

“Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night,
For He shall give His angels charge over thee,
To keep thee in all thy ways.”

There is no fear in love, and Jeanie, obedient, listening, heard—the terror is withdrawn.

In the library, father dear kept his lonely vigil. Only the fire-light dispelling the gloom. But two sentences ring in his ears:—

“God is love!”

“Love never faileth!”

The doctor friend, walking back and forth in the wide hall, found his feet keeping time with the song in his heart—

“God will take care o’ her!

God will take care o’ her!”

Hurried footsteps on the walk—someone bounded up the steps; the old butler, Robert, was at the

door before the bell sounded. The messenger's face was all aglow: "Telegram—Mr. Douglas;" thrusting the yellow envelope into the man's hand, he was off like a shot. Robert never knew just how he reached the library. He was faint with fear, torn with apprehension.

"Dorothy safe! Hope to get through to-night.—Stanley."

Mr. Douglas read and re-read, and his voice rang out as it had not for years. Robert knew, for he had served in his father's house.

Out in the hall the household waited—tearful, hushed. The doctor stood on a chair and read the telegram to them, while the clanging of the bells told far and wide the glad tidings. What did not willing hands and happy hearts do with those bells? How they talked, laughed, danced, exulted!

Timothy, hastening to the station, wondered if no one had gone to bed that night. The telegraph operator told him that Mr. Stanley had sent out the last telegram that had gone through the night of the storm.

The coast for miles had been watched. He had had wireless, searchlights, vessels, lighthouses and the life-saving stations all at work. "He's a great man! Nothing he has not thought of. Told me to keep still—no use adding to the heartache. I don't know just what he did say or do, but he made me know it was all right. He's made every one *want* to work their heads off. He was off last night on the first engine that got through to the city. "Couldn't wait for wires," he said to me; "you'll

know what to do when you get a message"—and *I did*.

"Listen—there she is!"

The shrieking of an engine—long—loud. It seemed as though no one breathed until the engine rounded the curve, and then cheer after cheer rent the air. No one knew what they did after that, until the doctor's voice rose above the din:

"A clear path, my friends," and like magic it was made.

The next moment Dorothy was in her father's arms and all the sorry lines were kissed away. Perched upon his shoulder, she greeted her friends in her own sunny way.

"I suppose," she said to Mr. Wright, "I did not get here in time for the Christmas Carols?"

"Yes, we waited for you; let's have them now, and "father dear," who had not lifted his glorious voice in song since that Christmas eight years ago, led the singers:

"It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near to earth
To touch their harps of gold."

Such singing! It came from hearts overflowing with joy and gratitude.

One after another of the old carols pealed forth, while the hearts of men and women grew kind to-

ward all the world, opened wide the gates that the message of Christmas might enter in.

“God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,”

sang the happy voices.

“The last verse once more,” said someone:

“Now all your sorrows He doth heal,
Your sins He takes away;
For Jesus Christ, your Savior,
Was born on Christmas day.”

* * * * *

It was nearly morning when, home at last, in her little white eider down gown, Dorothy sat in Jeanie's lap--Jeanie, whose arms had ached for her.

Warm and happy, she told them how she had stopped to play with Rings, till, bewildered by the snow, she had run in the wrong direction, felt water dashing over her feet, and then she had climbed into a boat and Rings jumped in after her; the next moment a big wave had carried them away into the blinding storm.

“It was cold and dark, and I began to be frightened,” she said. “I remembered, ‘Thou shalt not be afraid,’ and the things father dear and Jeanie had told me. So I talked to God; I told Him this was a pretty big trouble to face, and asked Him to take care of me, and, *of course*, He did. I began

to think of that song—'Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep':

'Secure I rest from all alarm,
For Thou alone hast power to save.'

(Timothy used to sing it to Lois, because she was afraid of the sea), and then I went to sleep. When I waked up I was at the lighthouse, all rolled up in a blanket. Mrs. Captain Joe was holding me in her lap and Captain Joe was giving me some hot milk to drink. Rings was rolled up in another blanket close by the fire. He looked so funny!

"I had a lovely time. I saw the big light. Captain Joe says it is *his* Christmas candle shining through all the year."

* * * * *

Christmas day found everyone brimming over with joy. Lois was very happy to have "a real father and mother of her own," though she confided to "Father Douglas" that she "hadn't expected them to be just a strange lady and gentleman."

Rings was the hero of the hour. Everyone knew now how he had barked and barked and so guided the searchers to Dorothy.

The Christmas party was a merry one. The grown people who had gathered to witness the "Santa Claus hunt" and help with the games, forgot their years, and went hurrying about in search of the hidden "gift."

It turned out that everyone found just what they wanted. Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, the doctor, and Mr. Douglas watched the fun while they made plans for the future of three little girls.

Wearied at last, the merry-makers gathered about the piano and listened as first one and then another sang some loved song.

One good-night song they begged, and Mr. Douglas, standing in the mellow light, sang as no one had ever heard him sing before:

“Then be ye ylad, good people,
This night of all the year,
And light up all your candles,
For His star it shineth clear.”

THE END.



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